



Elder Financial Abuse

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

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Door-to-Door Sales and Home Repair Fraud

A salesperson came to my door and said my house needs significant repairs. How do I know he/she is legitimate?

Seniors should be cautious of salespeople or contractors who show up at their door to solicit business. Criminals know that seniors may be retired and home during the day and target them.

The scams can take many forms. It could be an unsolicited contractor or repair person arriving at your door asking to check your heater, roof or air conditioner for free. It could be a contractor who claims he/she just repaired a neighbor's home, has leftover supplies and can do the same work at your residence for cheap.

Warning Signs

- A door-to-door sales representative tells you he/she has a gift for you if you give him/her a few minutes of your time. This allows dishonest salespeople to get into your home to pressure you to buy what they are selling.
- The sales presentation is done in your language, but the written contract is given to you in another language.
- The salesperson insists on reading only key portions of the contract aloud to you or tells you there is no need for you to read it.
- The salesperson has no form of identification or the contractor or repairperson cannot prove that he/she is licensed to do the needed work.
- The contract is mostly handwritten and may be so sloppy that it is difficult to read key sections. If it is not readable, you should not sign it.
- The salesperson or contractor tells you that you must act today or the offer is off. Unethical salespersons often use pressure tactics to close a deal. If they want your business, the offer should remain on the table for a reasonable length of time.

Prevention

- Get a second opinion before making any costly repairs, especially if you did not initiate the contractor's first visit to your home.
- Require that all estimates be in writing.
- Insist that you be allowed to read and review the entire contract.
- Request that you be afforded time to change your mind and cancel a contract even after you sign it.
- Never sign a contract or other document you do not understand.
- Request references and check them.

To check on home building, home repair or remodeling contractors, visit the Contractors State License Board website (www.cslb.ca.gov) or call (800) 321-CSLB (2752).